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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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General Observations

1. On 28 May 1953, Otechestven Front, Sofia, carried the following announcement:
"Two thousand and two hundred kilometers of new motor roads and 423 kilometers of metalled roads have been made during the last few years, while 12,300 kilometers of roads have been repaired."
2. Whatever the claims made for road constructions and improvements in Bulgaria in recent years, the fact remains that the road network is still quite inadequate by modern standards. The summary of conditions in Bulgaria, as given in a German Army handbook dated October 1940 is still largely valid. The summary reads as follows:
"The Bulgarian road network does not meet modern requirements. The main difficulties are these:
 - "1. On all roads, good stretches alternate suddenly with lengthy sections of neglected and frequently completely unmetalled surface.
 - "2. Heaping-up of ballast and narrow stretches of road between cliffs and rivers frequently make two way traffic impossible.
 - "3. Nearly all bridges are so narrow that traffic can only pass in one direction at a time. Very often there is a right-angle bend in the road immediately in front of both ends of the bridge.
 - "4. Streams and rivers, carrying more or less water according to the season, often flow across the road.
 - "5. Most bridges are constructed of wood and some are capable of carrying only very light loads.
 - "6. Nearly all roads are very dusty in dry weather and muddy, with a tendency to cause skidding, in wet weather.
 - "7. The terrain is such that detours are seldom possible.
 - "8. From the middle of December until the middle of April, snow drifts cause a problem in many places on mountain roads."

25 YEAR
RE-REVIEW

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3. When the Bulgarians talk of new motor roads, they generally have in mind the standard Balkan type of gravelled road. One of the few attempts to build a new highway with a firm and permanent surface is the Ruse - Byala (N 43-27, E 25-44) - Turnovo (N 43-04, E 25-40) project which is still being worked on. As for repairs, these are largely limited to filling innumerable potholes and spreading another layer of earth over the whole surface.

The Sofia-Mezdra Road

4. The Sofia-Mezdra (N 43-09, E 23-43) road through the Iskŭr valley has been complete for many months, except for the section between Lyut Brod (N 43-06, E 23-38) and Rebarkovo (N 43-07, E 23-41). In the summer of 1952, the finished part of the road was in good condition, but the winter was very hard on the crushed stone and earth surface between Svoje (N 42-58, E 23-21) and Sofia (the section bearing the heaviest traffic) and between Gara Lakatnik (N 43-05, E 23-23) and Lyut Brod. Rain, snow, and landslides have turned many parts of these two sections into a very third-class type of road with many narrow stretches. Attempts were being made in September 1953 to patch the surface, but these repairs are unlikely to survive the coming winter.

The Sofia-Varna Road

5. The main road from Sofia to Varna via Lovech (N 43-08, E 24-42), Turnovo (N 43-04, E 25-40), and Shumen (N 43-16, E 26-55, now Kolarovgrad) received some improvements during 1953, but much of the road is still in bad and even deplorable condition for motor traffic. There is, in particular, one extremely bad stretch about 15 kilometers on the eastern approach to Lovech. This stretch includes many bad and narrow bends, and the maximum safe speed is 20 kilometers per hour.
6. The section between Lovech and Sokolovo village (N 43-04, E 24-37), which until recently had been very bad, has had its crushed stone and earth surface renewed. Also, the road in this area has been widened in parts and new drainage ditches have been dug.
7. In July 1953, road work was in progress between Malka Brestnitsa (N 43-05, E 24-11) and the bridge over the Kalni River at N 43-02, E 24-16. This bridge, like the one over the Vit River immediately to the west, is an ancient wooden structure. A new single-arch concrete and masonry bridge is being built over the Vit River. A completely new and wider road bed is being prepared near Malka Brestnitsa. The new alignment lies slightly to the north of the existing road. At the end of July 1953, there was very little water in the Vit River, but a great deal in the Kalni River and in the stream that joins it near the bridge at N 43-02, E 24-16.
8. Between the points eight kilometers and four and one-half kilometers west of Turnovo by the old road, a completely new alignment is being made to eliminate a number of curves.
9. Between Prolaz (N 43-10, E 26-30) and Tŭrgovishte (N 43-15, E 26-35) road work is under way to widen the road to eight meters; the road will have a crushed stone and earth surface, and the project was partly completed in July 1953. At Prolaz itself, a new small masonry bridge has been built and a larger concrete and masonry bridge was under construction in July 1953.
10. Work on the new section of road which will eventually replace the existing appalling road from Varna to the top of the heights overlooking the city on the main road between Varna and Shumen via Novi Pazar (N 43-20, E 27-11) had not advanced very much

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during the 13 months July 1952 to July 1953, and at the present rate of progress will not be finished for two or three years. However, it is possible that an effort will soon be made to accelerate work on this section.

The Varna-Provadiya Road

11. The road from Varna to Provadiya (N 43-10, E 27-26) via Reka Devnya (N 43-13, E 27-36) is three to four meters wide with one-meter shoulders on either side. This road is in very bad condition, but seems to be little used except around Reka Devnya itself, near which the Karl Marx State Soda Works is under construction.

Roads Through the Shipka and Troyan Passes

12. The roads over both the Shipka and Troyan passes were largely in good condition in September 1953. Their surfaces are of the usual Balkan crushed stone and earth type, with an average width of about four meters. There are no steep gradients (maximum 1 in 10), although there are some rather sharp bends. The approach road to Shipka village (N 43-42, E 25-20) and on to the top of Shipka Pass (a distance of 15 kilometers), on the highway to Gabrovo (N 42-52, E 25-19) from Kazanluk (N 42-37, E 25-24), is from six to eight meters wide. It has a metalled surface and is in good condition. On the other side of the Balkan Mountains, just south of Gabrovo, there are three kilometers of very bad road. There are no bridges of any significance on either the Shipka or Troyan pass roads.

Sofia-Sliven Road

13. The condition of the sub-Balkan road leading from Sofia via Karlovo (N 42-38, E 24-49) and Kazanluk (N 42-37, E 25-24) to Sliven (N 42-41, E 26-19) and beyond varies considerably throughout its length. From the point N 43-43, E 24-10 where a road to Koprivshitsa (N 43-38, E 24-21) forks south to a point three kilometers west of Klisura (N 42-41, E 24-27), the road winds its way through hilly country, and has an average width of four meters but frequently narrows to three meters and less. There are many subsidencies and several steep sharp curves on which it is difficult to operate heavy vehicles. Parts of this road are extremely dangerous in wet weather because much of the surface is practically only earth and is apt to become very muddy and slippery; the metalled portions of the road are usually in an advanced stage of deterioration. Improvements have been made around Klisura; the road width here varies between four and eight meters. Road work is in progress between Vasil Levski (N 42-36, E 24-54) and Kalofer (N 42-36, E 24-58), and a new alignment of the road appears to be planned.
14. From a point immediately west of Kazanluk to a point 13 kilometers west of the town, i.e., immediately south of the village of Dolno Sakhrane (N 42-38, E 25-14), the main road to Kalofer has been closed and all traffic is diverted to side roads and tracks north of the main road. The reason for this is the construction of the Georgi Dimitrov Dam which is connected with the Koprinka hydroelectric power project.

The Oryakhovo-Vratsa Road

15. In addition to the Ruse-Byala-Turnovo road mentioned above, another north-south road is receiving much attention. This is the Oryakhovo (N 43-44, E 23-58) - Borovan (N 43-26, E 23-45) - Vratsa (N 43-12, E 23-33) road, which has been greatly improved by the laying of new foundations and surfaces and by replacing the wooden bridges with concrete and masonry constructions. In September 1953, work was progressing at many places for sections several kilometers long. The apparent object is to convert the road into a good motor highway with a well-metalled surface and a uniform width of about six meters.

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